

So I think we're in as good a shape as we're ever going to get, and we might as well just go to work.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to depar-

ture for Camp David, MD. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel at Camp David, Maryland

July 11, 2000

Middle East Peace Summit

Q. Mr. President, how is it going? Mr. President?

Q. How long is it going to take, Mr. President?

The President. We pledged to each other we would answer no questions and offer no comment, and I'd like to set a good example. [Laughter]

Q. Can you resist us, sir?

The President. It's difficult to resist, but I will make it—today, at least.

Q. Is that the only agreement you have reached so far? [Laughter]

The President. That would be answering a question. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:25 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on Environmental Protection Agency Action To Strengthen Water Quality Protections

July 11, 2000

Today's action by the Environmental Protection Agency to strengthen water quality protections nationwide is a critical, commonsense step to ensure clean, safe water for all Americans. While we have made tremendous progress over the past quarter-century, too many of our rivers,

lakes, and bays are still too polluted for fishing or swimming. With the new strategy we launch today, we will work in close partnership with States and communities to tackle our remaining pollution threats and complete the job of cleaning up America's precious waterways.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Haiti

July 11, 2000

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to section 559(b) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2000 (Public Law

106-113), I hereby transmit to you a report concerning the status of Haiti's progress.

The report contains eight subsections, that provide information required by section 559(b)

July 12 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

of the Act, to the extent that such information is available. These subsections address:

- Governmental Institutions Envisioned in the 1987 Haitian Constitution;
- Privatization of Haiti's Major Public Entities;
- Efforts to Re-sign the Lapsed Bilateral Repatriation Agreement, and Cooperation in Halting Illegal Migration;
- Investigations and Prosecution of Extrajudicial and Political Killings, and Cooperation with the United States in Such Investigation;
- Removal and Maintenance of Separation of Human Rights Violators from Haitian Public Security Entities or Units;
- Ratification of the 1997 Maritime Counter-Narcotics Agreement;
- Development of Haiti's Domestic Capacity to Conduct Free, Fair, Democratic, and Administratively Sound Elections; and
- Demonstrated Commitment of Haiti's Minister of Justice to the Professionalism of the Judiciary, and Progress Toward Judicial Branch Independence.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12.

Statement on the Accident in the Philippines

July 12, 2000

I was deeply saddened to learn of the lives lost and families devastated by the terrible incident that took place on the outskirts of Manila. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered losses and injuries. Our thoughts and prayers also go out to those who are still waiting

to hear word about friends and family members still missing.

NOTE: On July 11, debris from the collapse of the Payatas garbage dump killed more than 100 area residents.

Statement on Proposed Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Legislation

July 12, 2000

Thirty-five years ago this month President Johnson enacted the Medicare program into law. The program has proven to be a remarkable success, providing basic health care services to tens of millions of older Americans and people with disabilities. Since its enactment, there has been a decrease of over 60 percent in elderly poverty and Americans over 65 now have the highest life expectancy of seniors anywhere in the world.

I am particularly proud of my administration's stewardship of the Medicare program. When I came into office, Medicare was projected to be-

come insolvent in 1999. Our success in keeping overall and health care inflation low, combating fraud, waste, and abuse, and making the Medicare program more competitive and efficient has resulted in the strongest Medicare Trust Fund solvency in a quarter century. We have extended the life of the Trust Fund to 2025 and Medicare premiums are nearly 20 percent lower today than projected in 1993. We have also modernized the program to cover preventive services and coverage for clinical trials.

We need to build on our successful management of the Medicare program and prepare it